

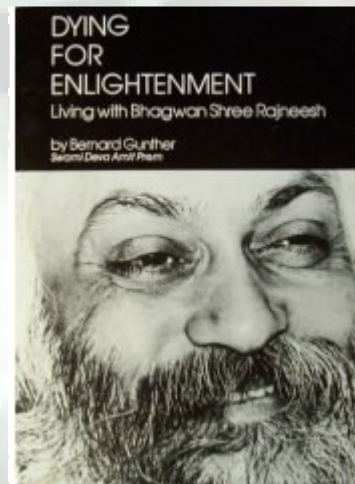
Interview with Amit Prem.

Darshan Diary

Blessed are the Ignorant.

Monday 27 December 1976

Amit Prem—Formerly Bernard Gunter, author of 'sense and relaxation', 'what to do till the Messiah comes', 'massage', 'how the West was one' and 'love view', took sannyas on November 19th. (See 'The Shadow of the Whip').



In the following few days, Amit Prem was thrown into something of a turmoil. He became ill shortly after taking sannyas and descended into a period of doubt and confusion

Surviving this' dark night of the soul', Amit Prem began to feel more settled in his orangeness (see December 14th where Osho talked to Amit Prem about positive feelings arising out of a negative state).

Since the evenings Darshan, Amit Prem has returned to Osho several times—ostensibly to say goodbye, but it seems that in spite of himself, he cannot leave. It is reported that he was actually in Bombay, half an hour away from takeoff, when he was heard to mutter, 'I don't know why I'm going'—and he returned to the ashram.

He is still here at the time of writing, can be seen at any time of the day, strolling around the ashram, an expression of unadulterated bliss radiating from him!

The following conversation is composed of excerpts from two interviews with Amit Prem—one on December 9, and one on January 1, 1977

Maneesha: Had you been doing the rounds of gurus or whatever else has been talked about, before coming to Poona?

Amit Prem: I'm always interested in seeing what's new in growth circuits, so I spent a little time with Muktananda and est, but just as a peripheral activity.

Maneesha: So did Osho have some appeal for you other than just that he was someone new?

Amit Prem: Well, it was not that he was someone new, but that he was someone old. The feeling that I had about what I read, was that it was the same thing that I'd read from all kinds of sources and what I'd been writing, but it was coming from a deeper place than I'd ever seen before and with a kind of authenticity.

Osho seemed to be speaking from the inside out, and everyone else seemed to be speaking from the outside in. I think that for me, that was really unique about him, and the fact that he was attempting to really do a holistic thing. I've never seen that happen in the West, and it's a shortcoming I feel of every particular direction in the west and the east.

Everybody has a 'piece of the pie'. I feel that Osho is the first person that I've seen who has at least got the whole pie together. Being a Pisces, I seize upon that! (a chuckle).

Maneesha: Did you see yourself as a 'seeker'?

Amit Prem: I don't want to define myself as a seeker anymore, because seekers are people who constantly seek and I really want to find, so I define myself somewhat differently now.

I've been looking for a long time, and yes, I guess, just trying to understand. I think I'm really beginning to understand that I can't understand, and I'm feeling very comfortable—especially these days—with that. So I guess that I have been a seeker, that I don't see myself as a seeker anymore.

Maneesha: When did that transition happen?

Amit Prem: Well, I think it's been happening, but I think that in some ways, Osho, has really been an important confirmation of a lot of things I thought, believed. I have really come to feel

an outer substantiation that has become an inner reflection of substantiation.

Maneesh: When you were younger, did you have a feeling of wanting to know you were, of feeling that you didn't belong, or anything like that?

Amit Prem: You see, one of the problems of being successful—not that I'm incredibly successful, but I'm fairly successful in terms of Western standards—is that it's never enough. But people are always saying that it's never enough—people who are really into various spiritual traditions, verbal traditions, say that, but it really became something that was very real for me. And so the question is, 'What's behind it?'

I think I still have some bias in terms of it being 'religious' or 'spiritual' or something like that, because those terms: connote certain kinds of images which have certain kinds of associations. But if we're talking about the essence, if we're talking about the light—all those are much more neutral terms—that's something I think I've been moving towards, although, in a lot of ways, and unconsciously.

Again, that has become a lot clearer. And not just clearer in my head—it has become clearer in my experience of myself and of Osho and of life.

But especially in the meditations and when I attend the discourses now, I really find that the words are going on, but also that there's a being that pervades the words. I sense that part of what's happening is that being is pervading me. My fantasy is that that sense of being is moving towards my own sense of being, and at some point, as that goes deeper, as my whole being radiates outward to meet that, there will be a meeting.

I do sense something that I've long for, for a long time, and just the beginning of it is that in some sense there is a feeling of being connected to the ashram, being connected to sannyasins everywhere. And just the beginning of opening up to people in a way that I now realise I closed off from.

Maneesha: Had you thought about taking sannyas before you came?

Amit Prem: Well, there was a part of me that was thinking about whether I should or shouldn't—my mind was playing that game, but I'd pretty much made up my mind anyway. When I was there with him, there was no reason not to—there was no reason (laughing).

Maneesha: What has sannyas meant for you?

Amit Prem: I think that for me, it had to do with giving up the old. It's like going through the door, then shutting the door, and what ever was in the other room

It's almost like the past is a kind of ticker-tape and that sannyas is like bringing out the scissors to cut the ticker-tape. Then before you is a path of blank ticker-tape. The old ticker-tape had all kinds of different tapes and different programs.

It really is a chance to be reborn and I really do feel that there's been a cutting away of the old. But cutting is even almost too harsh a word. It's almost as if the old has melted like old waxit's just melted away, and in its place is whatever will be.

Maneesha: How was the encounter group for you?

Amit Prem: I don't know what to say about the encounter—except that I feel like it was terrible and I got an awful lot out of it!

Maneesha: Was it unlike groups you'd done in the West?

Amit Prem: Well, it just went a step further. Essentially, here you're allowed to act out, and that both has its rewards and punishments! I had about seven fights—I guess because the group knew that I didn't want to fight: I think I really recognise a lot of my resistance, and it may have been the only way to deal with that resistance—just have to get it head-onbody-on! So while I might quarrel with the method, it seemed to accomplish something.

Maneesha: Do you have any idea why groups here go a step further than anywhere else?

Amit Prem: I think it's the permission you have—the permission to do that. Usually the rules in the West are that you can't act out violence or that you can't act sexuality. In most groups there's a line. I'm sure there's a place that the lines drawn here, but it seems off in the horizon. I know that there's a point at which Teertha (the group leader) would have stepped in.

Maneesha: Did you feel aware of Osho being not very far awayperhaps his energy being present, a sense of his 'protective aura,' if you like?

Amit Prem: I was aware of a different energy existing there—not only in the group, but in general—and pervading the place.

Most of the seminars I've done in the West have been five days. Usually in those five days there's a sense of dragging—this will never end.

This group was seldom dragging even when nothing was happening there wasn't this sense of dragging boredom that seems to manifest in workshops I done before.

One of the thoughts I had was that I'd really like to do the vipassana group here because it seems as if the vibration here that he creates makes it easier, because it's a sort of lift. So in spite of how heavy things got, there was a lightness about the heaviness. That's pervasive and that's real, and of course that's what the rational mind can't deal with. And it's marvellous that it can't, because what it does is force me to know that I don't know—at least in any kind of verbal sense. My brain feels much softer—along with my body.

I felt a couple of nights, but one night in particular, that Osho was somehow even more present. I noticed that Teertha, who often speaks with one hand, was speaking a lot with two—Osho often speaks with two.

Also, as precise as Teertha is, I find that he is like the rest of us—hit's and misses. That particular night he was just hitting, one

after the other. It was like zen archery. There were times when I felt as if something were added to the group.

Maneesha: Did you feel that, because there were other sannyasins in the group, that made for a sense of camaraderiemade for a closeness that might be missing in a group in the West?

Amit Prem: I don't think that was so much a conscious factor. There was a certain sense that we were all on the same sea-if not in the same boat-and so there was probably some sense of connection that may have been above and beyond what I had experienced in the West. Again, the structure, Osho's energy, the situation, almost made it impossible not to feel that connection.

Maneesha: Do you feel more a part of the ashram and other sannyasins than perhaps you did before the group?

Amit Prem: Yes, but in a funny way. It's almost as if I'm no longer resisting the connection, so it's not that I'm more connected-the connection is the same but I'm not resisting the connection. It's almost as if a layer of sludge or tar or something has gone, and with that, it's all just easier.

So it is really like the thing that they talk about-of it just happening. I feel a little bit like the polishing process has been taking place, and the jewel-which was always the jewel-is emergingbut it always was. It was just not being allowed to radiate.

Maneesha: What was the Darshan with the group like?

Amit Prem: Well, the analogy that I use is that I was a pin cushion-totally stuck with pins-and Osho came along and put in a darning needle! Because that was super-heavy for me-what he did. In retrospect, in perspective, I think it was an incredibly deep gift.

Amit Prem went on to say that although it had thrown him into a turmoil-the ultimatum of whether to remain a sannyasin or not-he was able to witness it while it was

happening, and to trust it as just part of a process

Amit Prem: I think, for me, that's one of the real values I've got here—to trust the process. And by process, I mean life, I mean Osho, I mean myself.

I still find that I'm a lot in my head, but it's as if my head is expanding and that there's more space, and that the door is ajarnot quite as closed. I don't know if you've ever seen those big doors in New York where they have about six different locks? I felt some connection with that!

My feeling is now that I still have a latch on my door, but it's swinging. The latch sometimes comes off and sometimes the door comes off, and sometimes there aren't even any walls!

Maneesha: Can you talk about other changes you feel you've gone through since you've been here?

Amit Prem: Well, one of the koans that I've always felt about my experience here is: Why in the world did he give me that name?—because in my head I don't experience myself as being loving.

Maneesha: What does Amit mean?

Amit Prem: The name he gave me—Amit Prem—means divine, boundless, formless love. At times I've thought, 'He's joking with me!' But I've really begun to sense something that other people had sensed that I've not allowed myself to sense too much—and that is that I can be a very warm person.

One of the changes that emerged out of the group—which is something that I knew on a surface level, but I got to know on a much deeper level—was how I was rejecting people in order to keep a certain myth—but nobody loves me; I'm not going to love anybody else.

I really saw in the process of the group how I was perpetuating that in what I was doing to keep myself from loving people and keeping people away. I could sense the real change in that—of being much more open to giving love, to giving

warmth, to caringinterestingly enough in a very sort of non-attached wayand being able to receive. For me, that's a beginning.

There are two reasons why I decided to take sannyas, or stay with sannyas--and that's one of the reasonsbut I'm beginning to understand the possibilities of moving towards that reality.

The second thing is--I think it is going to be a lot more fun being a sannyasin in the West than not being a sannyasin. If anything else is reason, it is that I came here supposedly fed up with my life--not that it's all bad, but a lot of it is empty and not rewarding anymore. Inner, it's an old game revisited.

It's really interesting to me because I thought I came here and I wanted a new name and I wanted a new life, and I wanted to do something which was of a somehow more joyous, meaningful, dancing nature--and I was given that and resisted it! Like the bachelor who wants to get married and sees a beautiful lady and says, 'well, wait a minute! I don't know that that is what I want. Even though I'm fed up with my bachelor existence, there is still something that I'm getting from it'I forget what your question was, but I think that what I said somehow relates to that.

I think that the loving thing--the opening up to love--is what he sawthat that possibility was there.

Another thing--that I think is related to feeling much softer both in my body and my personality--is a transition about my feeling about thoughtabout really coming to understand on another level the insanity of thought and of not being caught in thought to the extent that it shapes what is, rather than seeing simply what is.

For some reason I feel that the force field around here tends to intensify what is, so that there's more synchronicity here, or if there's not more synchronicity, you're just more aware of the fact that synchronistic things are continuously happening.

Maneesha: Do you have a sense that your work is going to be

somewhat different now?

Amit Prem: I have a feeling that I'm going to be willing to take more chances. I feel very open to letting his energy work through me.

Maneesha: When I asked that I was referring to your writing rather than your group-work.

Amit Prem: I haven't thought much about that, so I don't know. I mean, I hope so.

What's crazy is that I find I'm thinking less and that I don't have to think. In a way it's almost what he's doing each morning (at the discourse). Sometimes I think that I haven't been using my mind and I'm not going to be articulate, but perhaps it's an articulate-ness that's a little bit more palatable in the sense that it's not trying to be so precise. Maybe that will be an aspect of the writing.

I just know that it's largely a matter of getting out of the way. I also have some sense that there's so much more. I've always had this sense, but now I really sense its deeper again-as everything is deeper. It's like it's another level. It's not a huge jump, but it's a qualitative jump.. ..a real qualitative jump rather than a huge jump.

I also think that there's a lot of possibilities for channelling whatever wants to come through. I've always felt that with the writing I did. I really don't feel that I write the books; they seem to do that themselves.

And one of the things that I'm learning here-which I needed a lot-is to stop doing so much. Even if I'm not doing so much, I feel like I should be doing more. So there's a part of myself that doesn't leave me alone, so what I've been doing a little bit with the writing, is just leaving myself alone and letting in

Maneesha: Will you talk about your impressions of Osho?

Amit Prem: Well, my first experience of him was that totally ordinary extraordinariness. He was exactly as I imagined he

would be—but nothing like I imagined he would be. In other words, I knew how he would become but there was no way of my knowing how he would be

He's just, for me, a pure mirror. There is no way for me that I can imagine anyone not falling in love with him. You know, how can you reject the sun? (Laughing) But that's not even really a correct analogy because sometimes you don't want the sun.

It's really funny, because the whole essence of it is that your mind is almost taken out of your head and put aside and then isness, is. So it's like that—like forgetting everything that you don't know and knowing everything you do (laughing). I don't know if that makes any sense—but that's what happens!

Maneesha: So did you fall for him immediately or did you feel that the connection had already been made?

Amit Prem: It was like the connection was there. It's very hard to articulate this. It seemed to me that it was like knowing I was going through a door. There was the door, the door opened and I went through it—and he was just adorable! It's known as 'doorshan' (laughing)

In the second of the conversations, Amit Prem was asked if he felt his relationship with Osho had changed in the time he'd been here.

Amit Prem: I think when I came here I had a shell, and that I needed that shell because I was afraid that if it cracked it would all spill out.

I see the analogy of an egg, and not only was the egg in the shell, but it was a hard-boiled egg. In the alchemy and transition that's taken place here, I sense that the shell disappears at times and that the hard-boiled egg becomes a soft-boiled egg moving towards a fresh egg. There are times when I really get into the white of the eggand I still have to move into the yolk!

Maneesha: So how does Osho fit into that?

Amit Prem: It seems to me that Osho is the space around the egg. So what I'm saying is that the egg has been penetrated and partially transmuted, because I think that when the yolk is penetrated, that there's no egg and there's no yolk and there's no white—there's just the egg's essential! (existential)

Maneesha: Do you feel that yours is a love relationship?

Amit Prem: I once told Werner (Erhardt) that I knew that I didn't want to marry or become engaged to est but that I wanted to date her once in a while (pause). I feel like I'm going steady with Osho. Yes, I think that a good way to put it. I really feel I now have a relationship. I would like it to go deeper in a sense, but I really am going steady with him.

In a sense of romance, this seems a totally inept analogy because frankly, I don't go steady with many girlsor gurus, or whatever. And that's probably a very real way of putting it.

Maneesha: Do you find him physically very inspiring?

Amit Prem: I don't that we have so much as a physical relationship. I mean, he's a lovely being. What I like about him, what turns me on, is the way he movesthe way he moves his handsand the feeling I get is of how it is inside his bodyHis smile and his humour, and justthe incredible adroitness of the capacity of his mind, but also his ability to work with people in situations. You know that kind of thing—the dance he does.

Maneesha: Do you see him as your potential actualised or as the affirmation of your total being?

Amit Prem: Yes, I think that he is, as far as I can tell, the only totally whole person I've ever met—and I've dealt with a lot of gurus and a lot of leaders and 'great figures of our time'. The sense that I have is that he is uniquely integrated and that he's total—and I've never sensed that in anyone.

And as he says, it is infectious. I feel opened by his infection and the affection!

Maneeshha: How did you experience him on his birthday?
(December 11th)

Amit Prem: I was particularly impressed by his radiance, by the vibration that he was giving to people. It was very touching. But especially just his radiance. I kept wishing I had a picture of that because if I had something to put in a book, that would be it. There was just so much sweetness about him—and that had nothing to do with saccharine. It was just so blissfulit was delicate ..full of flavour. There were moments when I had some sense of the taste of what he is.

Again he speaks often of the analogy of the flower—the blossoms emitting the perfume, the delicate perfume. He's like some very delicate orchid, some rare

Maneeshha: What is so beautiful about him is that he seems so untainted by anything. Everything that comes in contact with him, passes through him, seems somehow purified.

Amit Prem: He's like a buffer, and whatever comes in is purified and by the time it reaches his being, it's polished and it's buffeted and softened, so that even steel has a softness about it—which is what a buffer doesmakes it look soft and shiny and polished. But it's interesting because it's not a high-gloss polish. Is a soft kind of ait's the quality that some metals have. Softness is the only word I canIt doesn't sparkle.

Maneeshha: Like the warmth or glow of a pearl rather than a sheen?

Amit Prem: Right. So instead of sparkling, it comes once and it gives a feeling which is not a feeling of a punch but a feeling of a gentle kind of caress